

AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

Please enter the following amendments without prejudice or disclaimer.

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

In the claims:

1. (Currently Amended): A process for the isolation of ~~[[a]]~~ crystalline carotenoid compound from microbial biomass comprising ~~the steps of~~ disrupting the microbial cell walls, separating cellular debris from the resulting carotenoid crystal containing ~~carotenoid-containing~~ residue, ~~including a wash of either the microbial biomass, the disrupted cell mass or the carotenoid-containing~~ washing the carotenoid crystal containing residue with a solvent ~~suitable~~ to remove lipid, suspending the obtained carotenoid crystals in water to float the crystals and remove biomass debris, recovering the crystals and, optionally, further purifying the crystals.
2. (Canceled)
3. (Currently Amended): The process of claim 1 ~~[[2]]~~, wherein the ~~carotenoid-containing~~ carotenoid crystal containing residue is washed with water prior to lipid removal.
4. (Currently Amended): The process of claim 1 ~~any one of the claims 1 to 3~~, wherein the solvent ~~suitable~~ to remove lipid is a lower alcohol or acetone, ~~preferably ethanol~~.
5. (Currently Amended): The process of claim 1 ~~any one of the claims 1 to 4~~, wherein a solvent ~~not miscible~~ immiscible with water is added to the microbial cells before, during or after disrupting the cell walls.
6. (Currently Amended): The process of claim 5, wherein said solvent ~~not miscible~~ immiscible with water is added to the disrupted cell mass after disrupting the cell walls.

7. (Currently Amended): The process of claim 5 ~~[[or 6]]~~, wherein said solvent ~~not~~ miscible immiscible with water is an oil, ~~preferably a vegetable oil.~~

8. (Currently Amended): The process of claim 1 ~~any one of the claims 1 to 7~~, wherein floating of the crystals is ~~improved by~~ effected with bubbling of a gas through the suspension.

9. (Currently Amended): The process of claim 1 ~~any one of the claims 1 to 8~~, wherein the water to float the crystals further contains a salt and/or an oil.

10. (Original): The process of claim 9, wherein the water to float the crystals contains a vegetable oil.

11. (Currently Amended): The process of claim 1 ~~any one of the claims 1 to 10~~, wherein the microbial biomass is from *Blakeslea trispora*.

12. (Currently Amended): The process of claim 1 ~~any one of the claims 1 to 11~~, wherein the carotenoid compound is β -carotene.

13. (New): The process of claim 4 wherein the solvent is ethanol.

14. (New): The process of claim 7 wherein the oil is a vegetable oil.